

September 14, 2001

Mr, Speaker,

Sadly we find ourselves today dealing with our responsibility to provide national security under the most difficult of circumstances.

To declare war against a group that is not a country makes the clear declaration of war more complex.

The best tool the framers of the Constitution provided under these circumstances was the power of Congress to grant letters of marque and reprisals, in order to narrow the retaliation to only the guilty parties. The complexity of the issue, the vagueness of the enemy, and the political pressure to respond immediately limits our choices. The proposed resolution is the only option we're offered and doing nothing is unthinkable.

There are a couple of serious points I'd like to make.

For the critics of our policy of foreign interventionism in the affairs of others the attack on New York and Washington was not a surprise and many have warned of its inevitability.

It so far has been inappropriate to ask why the U.S. was the target and not some other western country. But for us to pursue a war against our enemies it's crucial to understand why we were attacked, which then will tell us by whom we were attacked.

Without this knowledge, striking out at six or eight or even ten different countries could well expand this war of which we wanted no part. Without defining the enemy there is no way to know our precise goal nor to know when the war is over. Inadvertent or casual acceptance of civilian deaths by us as part of this war I'm certain will prolong the agony and increase the chances of even more American casualties. We must guard against this if at all possible.

Too often over the last several decades we have supported both sides of many wars only to find ourselves needlessly entrenched in conflicts unrelated to our national security. It is not unheard of that the weapons and support we send to foreign nations have ended up being used against us. The current crisis may well be another example of such a mishap.

Although we now must fight to preserve our national security we should not forget that the founders of this great nation advised that for our own sake we should stay out of entangling alliances and the affairs of other nations.

We are placing tremendous trust in our president to pursue our enemies as our commander-in-chief but Congress must remain vigilant as to not allow our civil liberties here at home to be eroded. The temptation will be great to sacrifice our freedoms for what may seem to be more security. We must resist this temptation.

Mr. Speaker we must rally behind our president, pray for him to make wise decisions, and hope that this crisis is resolved a lot sooner than is now anticipated.